

State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent

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Preschool Children and the McKinney-Vento Act

“Section 721. Statement of Policy.

Each state educational agency shall ensure that each child of a homeless individual and each homeless youth has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, **including a public preschool education**, as provided to other children and youths.” (*emphasis added*)

“Section 722.(g)(6) LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY LIAISON

(iii) homeless families, children, and youth receive education services for which such families, children, and youth are eligible, including Head Start and Even Start programs and **preschool programs administered by the local educational agency**, and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services, and other appropriate services;...” (*emphasis added*)

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act requires districts that **financially support preschool programs** (through IDEA, Title 1, 4K, district Head Start programs, etc.) to:

- coordinate identification and enrollment of preschool children from homeless families with school staff and community agencies;
- include homeless families in the district’s “Child Find” process (IDEA Reauthorization);
- immediately enroll preschool children from homeless families into the district’s preschool program (assuming they meet qualifications);
- follow “Best Practice” provisions for making placement decisions;
- provide assistance to allow children to participate “fully” in educational programs (bilingual assistance, school supplies, etc.);
- partner with school staff and community agencies to:
 - inform them of the educational rights of preschool children through training/in-service programs, and
 - develop the release of information forms among community agencies for reciprocal referrals.
- ensure the district’s policies and procedures do not serve as “barriers” for the enrollment and participation of preschool children from families in homeless situations;
- ensure homeless families are given information about community programs to assist them with basic needs;
- with guidance from the district’s homeless liaison ([state directory](#)), assist with:
 - registering and completing enrollment records,

- ensuring homeless preschool children receive services comparable to housed children,
- ensuring parents/guardians have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children, and
- ensuring homeless preschool children are not segregated or stigmatized.

Transportation and School of Origin

Preschool children may not have a “school of origin” if they have not been enrolled in a preschool program before. (*Note:* School of origin is defined as “the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.”) However, if a child enrolled in a preschool program administered by the public school district becomes homeless, and if the district provides transportation to the preschool program for “housed” children, the district is obligated, at the request of the parent or guardian, to provide transportation to a preschool child who becomes homeless .